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Wow!

Who knew publishing could be this much fun!

AntiMatters is a great deal of fun to read. If you didn't think so, you wouldn't have bought it (OK, there's the off-chance that you paid a buck to just shut that obnoxious salesguy up. But you probably are enjoying it, aren't you? Come on, throw me a bone!), but not nearly as much fun as it is to produce.

See, those of us who produce the zine are lucky enough to get first glance at all the articles that are produced, first glance at the photos, the art, the cartoons (No, there aren't any cartoons in here, but maybe someday...).

At AntiMatters, we get first shot at the opinions of the AntiFolk public. Pardon us if we gloat.

Gustav Plympton

A HAIKU

Anti-poetry.
Spoken word night at the Fort
gives Berger groupies.

s biederman

AntiMatters on the WEB: <http://www.geocities.com/sunsetstrip/club/3794>

I've been a fan of this stuff for years. It might explain why I wanted to be involved in putting out a fanzine for this stuff. It's times like this last month when being a fan of the AntiFolk scene seems especially satisfying. The Winter AntiFolk Festival was a raging success. Not so much as a celebration of a single album or a single artist, but as a celebration of a cornucopia of artists, a variety of individuals who cherish each others' art, and friendship, and... oh, hell, it was great times. The shows were great, the community was great... the celebration was great. I look forward to the Spring AntiFolk Fest. Oh, yeah, the point! It just makes producing the fanzine so much more satisfying, when I know there are so many other fans...

Jonathan Berger

Advertising in AntiMatters

Simple as 6 - 11 - 21!

For one quarter of a page you pay six dollars!

For one half of a page, just 11 smackers.

For a whole page of the promotion in the zine on the scene, pay just 21 tiny infinitesimal US units of currency.

You Can't Lose!

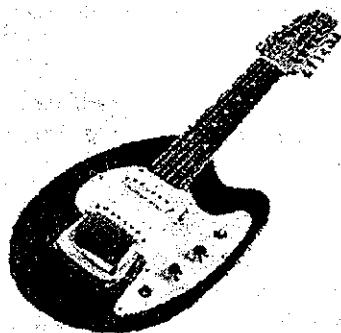
Commandant of Regiment One
Jonathan Berger

Commandment Two, Thou Shalt
Gustav Plympton

<1/17 ~ Sidewalk Café> I hate that Ronda Johanessen for mutilating what was once a beautiful body. What is more, it is no longer self-inflictment when she harrangues us with a ballad dedicated to her piercings-what a desperate cry for attention! I vowed to myself never to acknowledge her in print.

"Purple pink lay-hee day/ a-purple pink lay-daay..." Again and again in my brain. It's a chorus to a different song she wrote, not so much a song but a mantra. She has a few more written in this style, such as the popular 'Piss Song'.

Over a slow repetitive Peter Gunn-type triphammer, she yodels the chorus up high the first time and then she swoops down to the root note. In the verses, she tries not to expound the subject too far past the chorus/title. If Dee Dee Ramone was a chick, her folk music might have sounded like Johanessen's. Ronda definitely creates a centrifugal zone; the effect is quite hypnotic.



I can't get that fucking song out of my head. It's about a lady. She likes to wear pink and purple.

"A-pur-ple pink lay-hee-day/a-pur-ple pink lay-hee-daah..."

I gotta think of something else. Oh God, don't let me write about it... <John Kessel>

<1/19 ~ Orange Bear> My early entry for best new comer is Patsy Grace, who started attending open mikes at the Gaslight in 1998. Her confessional lyrics and fractured fairy tale verses float over lovely arpeggio guitar, like chocolate wafers dissolving in your mouth. Her voice is quite distinct, it is hard to pin it down. The timber has shades of Olivia Newton-John and Natalie Merchant, without being the least bit irritating.

Having only 3 years experience playing guitar, she's just starting out, but she has already been taken to the studio where she made a 2 song CD. At her debut feature at the divey Orange Bear, she insisted she was nervous, but wore it with a charisma that was totally engaging. I later discovered she was an actor as a kid, so she knows how to carry herself. A game of billiards stalled during her set. Eventually, the generic barflies were lulled from their perch to join the 2-3 friends of the anonymous singer at the tables in the front of the stage. With only the gentle strains of an Ibanez acoustic and her mysterious clear voice, Ms. Grace transformed the room.

Patsy Grace is also a skilled artist who has just completed The Wise Sophia, a children's book she wrote that features her puppets. It's a great story and a visually stunning

Report from the Fort

Dispatches from, to and about the center of AntiFolk.

book. Here's hoping that we see more of her. Everything she does is beautiful. I fell in love with her. You will too. <Kessel>

<1/24 ~ Sidewalk Café> Pianist O' Smith was a bit shy when he first appeared at Hoot several months ago; he was to discover his singing voice. It was anything special back then, were all psyched by his urgency. O' hammers them ivories pretty damn hard. His tempos have this lumbering stomp that recall Elton John's 'Bennie & the Jets', with pregnant pauses that instigate hysterics. I knew he would get a Sidewalk feature soon.

Smith the Anti-just starting wasn't but we



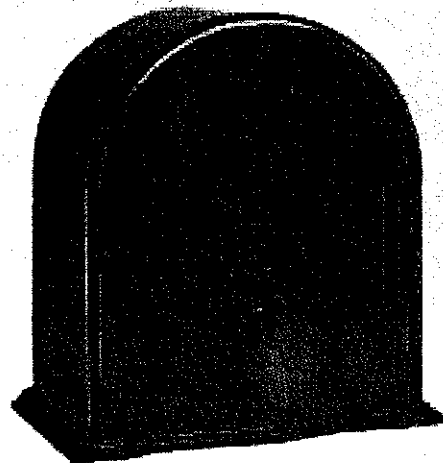
O. Smith could be the only artist who I would say may be directly influenced by Lenny Kravitz. That twists me, 'cuz I used to think of that nouveaux hippie as nothing more than a technically adept musical parrot. However, in Kravitz's piano ballads there is a vocal earnest that is echoed in O' Smith's furrowed-brow delivery; not to mention the hilariously ham-fisted naivite that Kravitz pontificates in his way-stoopit 'positive' lyrics-I'm sorry-I'm referring to O' Smith's wall-shaking Message Song, 'Children Of The World':

"STOP! YOUR BEAT-ING/ON THE INN-O-CENT/AND THE CHILD-REN/OF THE WORLD!"

He repeats this refrain with a slow thundering cadence, emoting like he's already reached the coda, but the appropriately hushed second verse comes around:

"You're put-ting guns in the hands of ba-bieeeeeees..."

That was when the house wine shot through my nose. WHAT HE SAY?! That don't make sense... Damn I love it, though. O'Smith is flashy. He is dynamic. He plays amazing



piano. And with the exception of his first open mike, a superbly over-the-top soul singer.

Report from the Fort

At O'Smith's first Sidewalk feature, the room was well stocked with the man's friends and co-workers, neighbors and former schoolmates. I think that even if Smith was a novice he'd still have a lot of supporters; he's warm and charming, and has a keening humility that draws people closer to him. He must have thanked the audience (at length) at least 8 times for coming to his show. I wished he would stop.

His vocals were Apollo-class. His piano runs were hard, fast and dizzying, like Dr. John in a brawl with Cecil Taylor. He wore a dope blue silk shirt. But I really want to tell you about his dancing.

Hear me now and hear me good. O'Smith is one of the wildest performance pianists in the history of Rock 'n' Roll. I'm telling you, the man dances better tethered to the baby grand than most people do free-handed! Bouncing, veering, flying over and sliding under whilst drumming the fiercest boogie runs-his stage presence a seminar for any would-be rock star. Holy shit! My mouth went dry. I dropped a ciggie and burnt my leg.

Who gives a fuck about lyrics, anyway? A wop bop a loo bop, a wop bam boom! <Kessel>

Winter AntiFolk Festival

<2/9 ~ Sidewalk Café>

Kessel got the first number at the AntiHoot, because he had a gig to promote. In an hour, he was slated to play the C-Note, leaving AntiFolk regulars questioning where to spend their time that evening.

Kessel made it harder by giving the Fort audience a special treat. With that caged look that Kessel so often wears, he went into a medley, but not of his stuff. For the first artist to present at the AntiHoot of the AntiFolk Festival, Kessel did covers. Featuring bits of Grey Revell, Jeff Lightning Lewis, and... was there some Joie in there? Kessel showed, quite economically, what the spirit of AntiFolk is all about.

At the end of his number, her quickly packed up his guitar and headed over to his gig, which he had quite ably promoted. I knew where I was gonna be in an hour. Maybe he'd cover some more Grey... <Jonathan Berger>



<2/10 ~ Sidewalk Café>

Are you a fan? I asked Miss Rebecca.

She grinned. "I'm a friend," she answered. I nodded in agreement. There is a difference. Fans go to see the performance. Friends go, well, because they're friends.

Said friend Jon Berger had cleaned up real nice for his show. Dress shirt, tie... he took the stage clutching a folder full of loose papers. I was ready for the drill... monologues detailing walks with girls going nowhere, diatribes about high calorie snacks, general ridiculousness. He did not disappoint. Jon Berger is king of amusing haplessness-- the guy who has applied years of study to his own failures, quirks, sore spots, neuroses and manias. And if he were not so excurciatingly aware of them, he would be almost pathetic. The relentness recognition is his saving grace-- a sort of dignified defensiveness posing as a Charlie Brown sort of clownishness.

And so he laid it all out with wild exaggeration-- quick lines about being rejected by prostitutes, overloading into an autistic freeze when it turns out that a beautiful girl can also talk, a long ode to the perfect woman that ends with the line, "And I hate your husband!"

But this particular performance went beyond that. There was some sort of odd and energetic internal reaction going on this time. Darker comic themes-- falling in love with a woman's fetus, sleeping with a girlfriend's brother and sister, anti-semitic slurs-- kept creeping into the mix. And suddenly, it was confusing. Because the guy's admitted haplessness renders him harmless, but the themes were terrifying, but the performance was goofy, but the self awareness gave it dignity and, suddenly, you had to take the guy seriously, for once, because it all made for a terrific performance. Spoken word can be deadening. There is a lot of self-absorbed prose and poetry being delivered in dull monotones throughout the cafes and bars of this city. But here was a guy who, despite his reputation as a clown, has power over you when he performs if only through sheer force of surprise. Watching him was like a walk through a cartoon forest strewn with land mines. And when he ended with an obscenity-laced cover NWA's "Gangsta Gangsta," you had to give him credit. Not only the sight of the the supra-white, button-downed, baldheaded Berger as ghetto homeboy absurdly hilarious, he was good at it, enough that it was entertaining for more than being funny. The audience went wild. Miss Rebecca leaned over. "Man," she said. "He was hot tonight."

I agreed. And looking back, when it comes to Jon Berger, I am more than a friend now. I am a fan. <Anne Kadet>



Report from the Fort

Winter AntiFolk Festival < 2/14 ~ Sidewalk Café >

Among the pantheon of talented musicians that frequent the Sidewalk Café, **Dina Dean** is a reigning deity. When she enters, heads turn, smiles erupt, people seem happier. There is a reverent hush when this "queen of the scene" takes the stage, but Dean's Valentine's Day performance left me wondering if such worshipful behavior is warranted.

Dina opened with "Decent Grave", a song of urban violence and decay, murder and redemption. While the lyrics were fresh, original and compelling, the melody was lifted almost note for note from Dylan's "Masters of War". There is a tradition in folk music of borrowing, but some subtlety is required to make it work.

An early highlight was "Walking With the Moon", which had an instantly memorable pop hook, simple but effective poetic images, and a very interesting, descending chord progression. Dean sings of "city streets at night", of loneliness, of the existential quest for freedom. Good work.

More problematic was "Show Me the Strangers", an account of the life of Christ, told through the eyes of his followers and disciples. Very few writers can pull off a song about Christ -like most, Dean came off sounding pretentious.

Dean's voice is both her greatest asset and her greatest liability. Her lower register is sultry, snaky and settled, but her falsetto is strained. Like Joni Mitchell, Dean shifts vocal gears frequently and dramatically. As she hones her style, these leaps will become breathtaking. As it stands, she lacks control.

Performers whose only accompaniment is a guitar need to be sure-fingered. Too often, it seemed like Dean was hesitating, tentative with her instrument. She has a natural, fluid talent, but she lacks confidence. As with her voice, this will improve in time, as she perfects her craft.

Overall, I was impressed with Dina's talent. Like Tracy Chapman, Joan Armatrading, and Suzanne Vega before her, she has an appealing restraint and an endearing modesty. Her songs are good, but she will do better work as she matures. Until then, she might have to settle for being a princess, rather than a queen. <Adam Fieled>

< 2/20 ~ Living Room >

He's damned funny, and he commanded the stage like some traditional folk storyteller. Despite that, **Randy Kaplan** put on a great show.

I wish I remembered more of the material. He had a song about God choosing him as the speaker of the Word, and how basically the liberal agenda is all right. He had a song about wanting to go for his best friend's girl, and hitting certain moral snags, called "Off Limits."



He had guests on stage. The following act, Mike West and Myshkin, joined him on some truly traditional instruments, like guitar and vocals.

He had the audience in the palm of his hand. Randy Kaplan has what appears to be an adoring fan base, considering how many people screamed out song titles.

He had a plethora of pieces to perform. And they seem to find their way into his sets, considering how many different songs different people called out for.

Randy Kaplan had a little of Loudon Wainwright III about him, and a little more of Dan Bern, who he used to play around with, a million years ago.

Randy Kaplan had a command over the audience that was admirable. And, if he had half as good a time as I had, then I still had twice the fun. <Berger>

< 2/21 ~ Sidewalk Café >

Bit by bit it's clear that Greg Weiss is losing his mind. It's very exciting. Weiss is probably the most traditional-sounding 'folk' stylist on the scene (he plays softly, too) and I worry that he may be ignored for this. At this particular open mike, a separate personality named, Carmine emerged. He was very sweet and friendly, but didn't seem that interested in completing a song. His Jerry Lewis-like histrionics stretched about eight minutes of set time; made the host sweat a lot. I enjoyed Carmine. Gregg is cool, too. <Kessel>

< Sidewalk Café ~ Any ol' Monday >

At around 2AM every Monday night, Lach will break into his late night set, which as he says, is played for "the waitress, the walls, and the weirdos." After a long night at the AntiHoot, amazingly there is still a lot of energy left in the room. Lach will play some well-known tunes, but will often break into tunes he's currently working on, and older songs he doesn't play often at all, like "Sensitivity," and "Everyone In America is Drunk."

Lach will also play a game with the people remaining -- he will ask everyone to throw out a random topic, and he'll make up a song on the spot about it. The topics he'll receive range from serious, confrontational material like drug addiction, to total nonsense like light bulbs and winter in Russia, or even being asked to take aspects of other people's songs and work them into one of his own. You never know what he's capable of coming up with on a given night -- for a topic I once gave him, interracial relationships, he came up with a song called "The Jew and the Eskimo."

At times the energy in the room will spawn an impromptu late-night jam session with myself and the other musicians in the room. We'll generally break into Lach's hit songs, like "Blue Monk", "I Love Them", and "The Boy Who Never Went Outside", and occasionally we'll throw someone else's songs in, like "Drinking with God" by Joie/DBG. They are never played for much of an audience, just for ourselves and our closest friends, but the late night jams are a great reminder for why I got into music in the first place -- it's fun. <Kenny Davidsen>

Berger's KFC Gamble Is Fried

Page Six™

Just asking...

Which beautiful Side-walk legend was recently spotted drinking piña colatas and getting caught in the rain with Ric "Nature Boy" Flair? Which "human" was seen at Limelight not sporting his usual "Who" shirt but rather a "Dave Clark 5" T? Which piano playing, glasses-wearing playwright was so drunk that he tried to play "piano" on the carrots and celery spread at Trump Tower during the "Enamel the Camel" benefit?



Emery: No monkey maven.

Next time you have a hankering to go to the Bronx Zoo, don't bother calling Dan Emery. Emery now has a lifetime ban from the Zoo. But how did a peacenik like Emery get banned? Turns out he took exception to the rock throwing apes in the primate house. On Valentines Day, a crazed Emery dressed up in a gorilla costume and tried to break into the primate house. He was arrested immediately after getting "Coco" the ape into a headlock. "I'm gonna lay the smack down on those damn dirty apes if it's the last thing I do!" Emery said through his publicist.

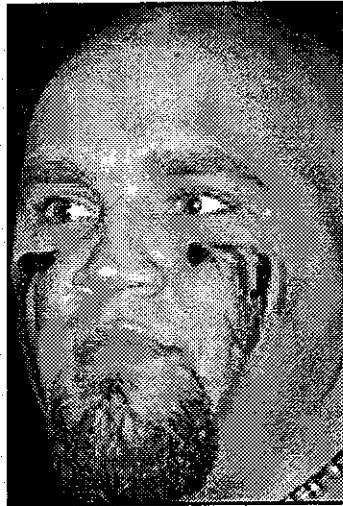
IT LOOKS like Jon Berger won't be getting out of the ANTI-MATTERS business anytime soon. Last week, the burnt-out editor/writer/stalker closed down his final Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise on the upper east side.

Berger, 39, had originally opened 17 KFC's throughout the city, amid much chest-thumping that he would combine "the best of KFC with the best of the Antifolk scene."

Yet the only difference seen in Berger's newly bought KFC franchises was that the entire menu was scrapped and replaced with nothing but bacon.

"What, you don't think Colonel Sanders enjoyed bacon? He LOVED bacon!" Berger would often scream. The last straw for many KFC diehards came when Berger began his promotion of

"a bucket of the Colonel's famous bacon." Losing money hand-over-fist, Berger was forced to close the



JON BERGER: KFC fans balk at his bawking.

KFC's one-by-one.

Berger's last-ditch attempt to keep his final KFC open was a benefit concert at the Astor Place Starbuck's. But while Berger promised the appearance of several Antifolk superstars, the only "talent" was a sock puppet show put on by Berger himself.

The event actually lost money when angry East Villagers caused a riot—the result of which was the destruction of a \$2,000 frappuccino machine.

Despite the failed franchises, Berger remains philosophical.

"What troubles me is how quick society is to judge you," Berger said through a spokesperson. "For instance, say you like to jump out of alleys and punch kids in the face—and also just happen to drive a truck for a living. Next thing you know the cops are beating the crap out of you at the precinct. And all because you drive a truck? That's what this whole experience has felt like."

Despite the setback, Berger has recently sold the rights to his story to NBC. The telepic "Bacon Never Killed Anyone: The Jon Berger Story" will premiere in May.

Sightings: Gene & Mimi at Sony Cinemas—with Mimi trying to talk Gene into renaming the group "Mimi & Gene"...Steve Espinola at Radio Shack on 5 Ave., trying

to buy a shortwave radio that plays nothing but Jolson...Dina Dean learning karate from Chuck Norris at Gold's Gym

Charles Herold's story is making its way to the silver screen again, but this time, things will be more true-to-life. Herold recently inked a deal to star in Trimark Pictures' remake of *The Charles Herold Story*. "The first time they made the movie," Herold says, "They tried to make it too much like *Citizen Kane*. This time, it'll be more like *Videodrome*." While it's unusual to remake a movie so quickly after the first version (made in 1997), Herold thinks this one will be even more popular. "While Tom Cruise played the part of Charles Herold in the first version, this time I'll be playing me!" Herold says.

Quotable...

"I'm a big-time New York City songwriter, but I'm still trying to figure out the plot to 'Gasoline Alley'," Lee Chabowski in *Details Magazine*



Lach: It's Tux Time!

Why Lach has been appearing 'round town dressed in a tuxedo surprised everyone but his brother Lloyd. "He's just picking up where Vincent 'the Chin' Gigante left off," Lloyd said, "But instead of walking around in his pajamas, he went in the other direction." That Lach!

Winter Anti-Folk Festival

Well, I got there a little late so I missed most of Neal with an A. But I should point out to him that there is an Indian name Anile (pronounced a-neal), which also fits the rules of his moniker. Not to be fussy, but he really should call himself "Neal with an A and no I", "Neal with an A and only 4 letters", or "Neal spelled N-E-A-L" to avoid confusion. I only caught a song or two of his and I confess I spent most of the time thinking about his name problems and not listening to his songs, but certain lyrics of his struck me even through the haze of my semantic obsessions and I

THE BILL

2/10
C-Note

Neal with An A
Bionic Finger
The Dan Emery
Mystery Band
Regular Einstein

noticed that a very attractive woman was mouthing most of the lyrics along with him, so whatever he's doing is working. I should have paid closer attention.

Up next was Bionic Finger, a band I'd heard of many times but had not had the pleasure of seeing up to that point. I was certainly impressed. I'm sure their instrument swapping shenanigans have previously been compared to Muckaferguson, so I won't waste any valuable time, space, or print on that (although in passing I should mention that if you missed Mucka's recent hysterically funny appearance on Amateur Night at the Apollo, you really must track down a copy.) They shine the most when they make use of the fact that they have 4 talented vocalists in the band. The song, "Big Dick" (I admit that I'm not sure if that's its official name, but those words seemed to be the most oft repeated) struck me as the only one where they really went all out and explored some of the sounds they could get with 4 vocalists. Once again I found myself distracted through-out the set. Their band name didn't bother me so much as the fact that the bench I was on kept bopping up and down, swaying and thumping. I looking over at Jon Berger sitting next to me, who was wildly gyrating to the music. "Look", I said peering over my bifocals, "I'm sure the band appreciates your enthusiasm, but perhaps you can keep your wild gesticulations and uninhibited bacchanalia to yourself as you are disturbing my digestion." (I had eaten dinner, a delightful but too rich Swiss and jamon crepe purchased from a streetside creperie, just moments before.) He explained that he couldn't stop dancing as he was excited that, subsequent to his previous night's equally vivacious spoken word performance, he was now in possession of fans. I admitted that that was very exciting indeed and, humbled, I moved away to sample a glass of C-note's house red in an attempt to settle my stomach and nerves. It was then that I noticed the "No Dancing" sign posted on the wall. I forgave Berger his trespasses against the law, noting that although moving in an dance-oriented manner, he was remaining seated. If only I had foreseen the anarchy which was to come next I would

'the sound of flagrant noise violations.'

have hied away the very instant that Bionic Finger struck their last note.

by dave wechsler

Up next was the Dan Emery Mystery Band. Due to the fact that their drummer has been deported to Canada, they had their old drummer Andy Morris back with them for this gig. And since he didn't know any of the new songs, they stuck pretty much with their old repertoire, pulling out the old faves Laundromat, Student Loan, Don't Let Me Die Tonight and others. As the band was clearly having a good time polishing off their old tunes, it seemed inevitable that the crowd would also have a good time. But, I ask, is it necessary for pleasure to express itself in law-breaking ways? For as soon as Mr. Emery launched into his ostensibly funky number "Shake Your Booty", Mr. Berger led an attack towards the front of the club and followed the closely regimented lyrics to the letter. He was joined by a number of others and soon, it seemed, much of the club was up and dancing. I protested and pointed to the sign on the wall, but was roundly ignored. Although feeling faint, I summoned enough strength to dial City Hall on my cel phone and asked to speak to Mayor Giuliani. When he arrived on the line, I simply held the receiver towards the front of the club where the funky booty-shaking was taking place and said to him, "That, Mr. Mayor, is the sound of several flagrant law violators dancing in a clearly designated no-dancing zone." I heard a click, and seconds later, a dial tone.

As I waited for the law officers to arrive en mass, Dan Emery finished off his set and Regular Einstein took to the stage with gusto and zest. They played mostly songs from their upcoming album "Robots Helping Robots" as well as some brand new songs. Leader Paula Carino even made the bold claim that one of the songs was "not even 8 hours old". She and stalwart cohorts Andy and Bill were joined by guitarist Andy Green for this show. (I should mention that RegE does not have a regular lead guitarist right now so if you know anyone who can rock, please get in touch with them.) At one point, Paula broke into some catlike dance moves which sent my heart into palpitations and I made a motion towards my cellphone to dial the mayor once more and ask about where his dance enforcers were, but perhaps she sensed my vigilance because she quickly straightened up and resumed singing in her intoxicating alto.

And then it was over. Regular Einstein's last notes from a song appropriately titled "All Over" faded away and another evening of the Winter Anti-folk Festival had ended. We all seemed a little older and wiser afterwards, as if we had seen something of each other that was both not expected and all-too-familiar. Dan kept telling me, "You look a little wobbly Dave.", and in an attempt to appear "hip" I passed off my imbalance as an overdose of alcohol, when really I was stumbling from sheer emotional exhaustion. The had seen the power of rock and roll to transform a group of seemingly normal well-balanced and well-behaved members of a law-abiding society into a wild, crazed, law-breaking band of dancing brigands. I shall never be the same.

What it's like When No One Comes.

By Anne Kadet, Full Throttle Aristotle

8:15 PM

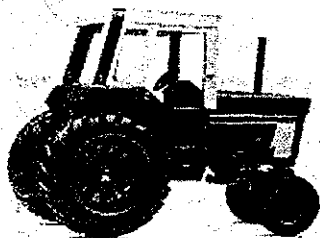
We get to the bar 45 minutes before the show. It's important to get a little liquored up before you play. The bartender is reading the paper. She is the only person in the room. But it's early. I turn to Tom, my live-in husband.

"Did you call anybody?"

He does not look concerned. "Everybody," he says. "I called everybody."

Tony, the accordion player, nods his head. "I called a bunch of people."

"Great," I say.



"I don't think any of them will come."

Pete the drummer mutters something to the same effect.

They start setting up. I sit at

the bar, and quiz the bartender.

"You usually get a lot of people here?" I ask.

She looks up and smiles. "Usually. There was supposed to be a band at eight, but they didn't show up."

This is bad news. We are a Band That Does Not Bring Anybody In. We are a band that relies on the band before us to bring in a crowd that drinks so much that they can't get up and leave.

Every few months, my live-in husband falls quiet and then suddenly asks: "What can we do to get people to come to our shows?"

I don't know. I don't know. We were once a bad band, but now we are a good band. We have good tunes. They are interesting. They are unlike what anyone else is doing, but still accessible. We are all competent. Tom has sustained many bruises in his wild efforts to entertain.

It hasn't made a difference.

When we started out in Buffalo, we were already band that nobody came to see, and we had a dream, a crazy dream that when we came to New York, we would find our audience. Free from the All Pearl Jam All the Time scene in the Queen City, we would attract a small but loyal following. And we left Buffalo at just the right time-- when nobody would book us anymore because they knew we are bad news. NYC was going to be a fresh start.

Hasn't happened. We are slowly but surely establishing a reputation as a band that will clear out the room. Box office poison.

8:22

The room is still empty. We are all on our second beer. I ask the bartender, hopefully, if she gets many people who come to the room not to see a particular band, but just to hang out. She looks concerned.

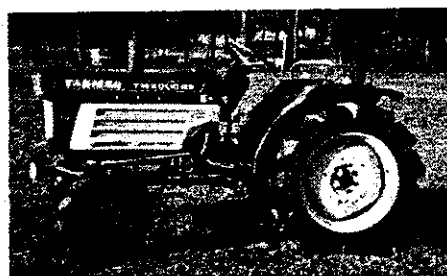
8:30

There are footsteps on the stairs. Audience!

It is just the 10 p.m. band. "Where is everybody?" asks the lead singer.

"The eight o'clock didn't show up," says the bartender.

He turns to me. "You gonna get some people in?"



"I think the rain is keeping people home," says Tony.

The singer cocks his head. "That's no excuse."

I want to take full responsibility. "No! It's no excuse!" I yell. I am in favor of full disclosure. If I had to book our band, I would call the bookers and ask, "Did you like our tape? Did you like it so much that it doesn't matter if we don't bring anyone in?"

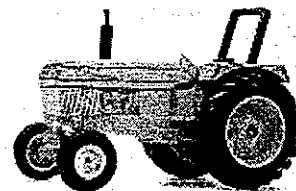
Tom is the one who books our shows. He was not, originally, in favor of full disclosure. But painfully, we have learned that promising a crowd of 60 come is not a magic spell that produces a large audience. Now, when bookers ask how many people we can bring in, he will say, "Twenty to thirty." This is a lie, but it's not a whopper. And when we play our show, and five people come, there is an off-side chance we can blame it on the stinky weather, unless some snot-nosed lead singer for the next band chooses to contradict us. There is an upside to this. Most bands hope for good weather. We like good weather -- maybe it means people will really come to see us. But we like bad weather too.

Then means we have an excuse. Any weather is fine with us. We are an all-weather band.

8:45

The room is still empty. Fifteen minutes until we go on. Pete, finishing his second beer, turns to the singer from the other band. "If you guys sit through our show, we'll sit through yours," he offers.

If the next band turns out to be our only audience, this will not be the first time this has



happened. We have actually played shows where no one came. Not a single soul.

This is among the most bizarre experiences a band can encounter. We tell each other:

"This will be a good practice." And then you get up on the stage, and play to nobody.

It's surreal. You pretend there is someone listening, that there is some reason you are doing this. You feel phenomenally silly. You want to die from the humiliation, but there is no one to witness your embarrassment. You wonder how much effort you should put in, but this weird professionalism that has been instilled in you. No one here? You play anyway and you play your best. These are the breaks. You just do it. And then it is over, and there is no one you did it for but yourself, and that is exactly the opposite of the reason you are in a band. You were in the band to play for other people. So what could this possibly mean? There is no one in the room to tell you.

I almost prefer this to the show where only five friends come out of loyalty. Then there are actual people there to witness your embarrassment. You play your heart out for them, and afterwards, they pat you on the back and

they say, "Hey great set." The rest of it is unspoken — the fact that they felt weird seeing you go through this, and you felt weird that they

witnessed it. It is another act of pretending that something actually happened, but now you have co-conspirators. The lie grows and grows.

9 p.m.

It's show time. The ten o'clock band went out for pizza. There is still no one in the room. Pete the drummer looks sad. "Not even Dave and Dan are here," he says.

This is hilarious. Perhaps out of some sort of weird loyalty, or maybe because they like our music — I don't know, and I will never ask — Dave and Dan are at every show.

"They called me," says Tom, "They said they'd come."

Well, gosh. Why play for no one when you can play for two?

"Let's wait," says Pete.

So we wait, for our audience of two.

9:10

We are still at the bar, drinking beer. The bartender looks up from her newspaper.

What it's like When No One Comes

"Why don't you guys go on?"

We cannot hold off any longer. Tom gets on stage and tests the mike. Nothing. There is something wrong with the PA, and there is no sound man. A wave of relief washes over the entire band. This will take a good fifteen minutes to fix! Maybe someone will show up in the meantime.

9:20

The night has a happy ending. By the time we figure out the PA, Dave has arrived, and he brought a girl! And Dan came! And Jon Berger, a loyal gentleman who comes

to almost every show, has arrived, with several people I have never seen before and will never see again. This does not constitute a real audience, but the 10 p.m. band, it turns out, has a huge following— a following that shows up early. We go on, play one song, and suddenly the room is packed. We are a real band! For just 45 minutes, we are rock stars. They like us just fine. They sing along to our cover tune. They clap with real enthusiasm. They will never come just to see us, but they will let us warm them up.

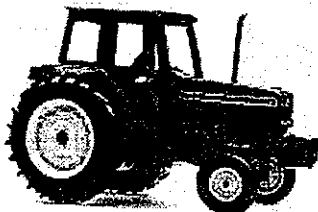
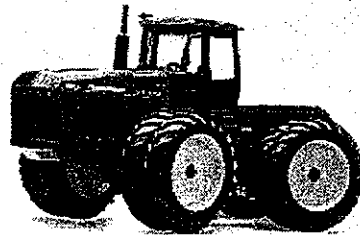
It is hard to play a good show to no one, but when the room is packed, you can feed on them, and we are hungry. We play a good set. Dread has been banished until the next show, and we are getting what we came for. We got lucky.

A painter can sit in his studio for years, and if no one buys his paintings, that's okay. He is painting for the future generations that will come to appreciate what he is doing. He can do great things, and even if no one ever sees it, what he has done is embodied in the painting. It is a permanent record. It cannot be erased. The painting is its own testament to the artist's effort. But when you're in a band, a band that doesn't record, playing for other people is the whole reason the band exists.

There is no hope for some future generation of fans to discover you. I love what our band is doing, and I hate that no one will hear it. Not because I want adulation, but because I want it to mean something. If you play to no one, the performance, in an ontological sense, didn't happen at all. The performance is devoid of meaning. And yet, we keep going out and playing.

If the reason we are in a band is to play for other people, and no one is listening, what is really happening? There is only one thing that comes to mind. If a tree falls in the woods, and no one hears it, did it make a sound? Does it matter? Maybe not. Maybe the tree enjoyed

falling.



FANDOM IN THE UNDERGROUND

by John Kessel

The very word 'fan' is derived from 'fanatic', which tells you everything you need to know about what it means to be one. Of course, we can't have discourse about fandom without mentioning 'stars' and their surrounding machinery, which draws us into that fabled dichotomy that both intrigues and disgusts us. The 'star', or celebrity, is a mythical hologram projected from a vast pyramid of business management, lawyers, accountants, publicists, media executives, low level promotional skills, and at the base, the most important foundation: fans. Without whom the star has little course for existence, although there have

been a few phenomena of celebrity with absolutely no public welcome. No need to name names here...

As I wrote the following, Christine approached my table with a caricature she drew of me. Thank you, Christine. This happens to me every now and then. John Kessel is a big big star.



I'm not really a prima donna, but I have always felt reluctant to approach famous people and salivate all over them, merely because they have a publicist, when I feel that these folks are, in actuality, my peers! Of course, we *all* have heroes, and I'm no exception. A few are still alive, so my fan colors were clearly exposed in my Dan Johnston article last January. So there! Let's talk about fandom.

In our microcosm that some call Antifolk, everyone is a star. And you know what else? We're all peers, too. And since this is the underground, it is imperative that we all be good fans.



Fans are celebrities in their own right; representing historical cultural movements. The Bobbysoxers championing Sinatra in the forties. Andy Warhol's Factory crowd at Max's from the mid-sixties to the seventies. England's Bromley Contingent in the late seventies. The scene is what you make of it. So get creative. If you want to think in purely selfish utilitarian terms, the love you give is the love you get.

"Hey, John Kessel," you ask, "how do I act like the good fan?" Before I answer, I thoughtfully scan you for telltale signs. Yep, there's your guitar case and your ream of papers full of half-finished song sketches. You are clearly torn between being a self-obsessed artist or a major catalyst of a burgeoning scene where you're still small potatoes. But the lights shine in your eyes and you want to meet it. Here's how.

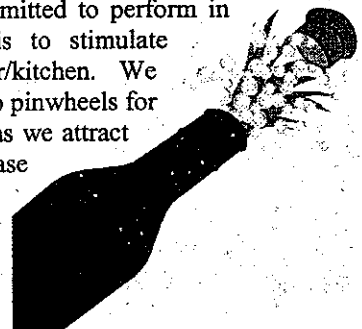
- 1.) The #1 rule is SPEND YOUR FUCKING MONEY!



You want people to buy your CD, yet you want to swap with the band that's selling *theirs*? No, no, that won't do. It's expensive being a musician. It's expensive making documents. Rehearsal rooms and van rental are economically punishing to bands. Don't ask to be on

the guest list. In most low level clubs, if a music act doesn't *draw* a certain quantity of paid people, they're not paid and not invited back. The van and studio always get their cash up front.

- 2.) Find inspiration in other artists that perform at open mikes that you attend, especially if your first impression is that they suck. Learn their names and watch their progress. Attend their gigs.
- 3.) You are *not* in competition with ANYONE! So stop hiding your tricky guitar chords, share your mailing list, and nix the slander graffiti in the bathroom!
- 4.) The audience is an instrument. If you don't believe me, you've never heard 'Frampton Comes Alive' or been to the Fort. Or a Jonathan Richman gig. Clap a beat. Sing along. Get up and dance. The greatest form of support is response. And it's *free*, you stingy bastard.
- 5.) Consume. This is similar to item #1. The main reason entertainers are permitted to perform in an establishment is to stimulate sales for the bar/kitchen. We could be farting into pinwheels for all they care, long as we attract customers to purchase their wares. Hence, a paltry \$3 minimum at Sidewalk. Better get wise- eat/drink



hearty, lest your fave local performers be replaced by a jukebox!

- 6.) Embarrassing Scenario: You're all worked up over this songwriter (for hypothetical purposes, we'll call her Konnie Jessel). You identify with what's in her lyrics—you think she *understands* you! You think her songs are autobiographical, and *now* you think you know all about *her*! Now you're approaching her after her big Mercury Lounge headliner, blabbing all this personal crap. IDIOT! Konnie doesn't even know you're alive! You're going on about abortions to her, when she reveals that the coat hanger in the song, 'Unwanted Child', was a *Joan Crawford* reference! A warning, fankids - beware!



FANDOM IN THE UNDERGROUND

By John Kessel

- 7.) Make compilation tapes of all your fave indie players. Give 'em to friends and enemies alike. That's good promotion for the musician and your cronies will be so impressed that you are hip to all this marginal, obscure stuff. Turned on to cool new sounds, they may bandwagon. Then they'll pull the coats on their buddies to check out this groovy underground noise. *Then* popularity snowballs... *Then* see the next item...
- 8.) Don't start writing off your fave band and dis them as a 'sellout' just because they got signed with a major label and have an MTV video. This is partly *your* doing for being a Good Fan.

Bill Popp's Annual Benefit

Written by Alex Henderson and Jonathan Berger

He does it every year.

After his father's death from a heart attack in 1986, Bill Popp, leader of Bill Popp & The Tapes, began honoring his memory with annual benefit concerts for the American Heart Association. Popp had received a great deal of encouragement from his father George L. Popp, aka "Daddy Tapes," and continues to honor him in these concerts to this day.

Family connections and responsibilities play heavily in the Bill Popp Story. Family, it seems, and death.

"I think that what really made me start working hard at my music was my mother's death from cancer in 1978," Popp explains. "I had told her I'd try to become a full-time musician, and I felt I owed it to her memory to really pursue a career in music. So I started burying myself in my music. A day after my mother died, I wrote 'She's In The Sky' for her—and I still do that song to this day." It was in 1981 that Popp founded The Tapes, whose main focus is Popp's own material. Songs Popp had written in the late

1970s—including "She's In The Sky" and the passionate "Don't Hold It Against Me"—continue to be a permanent part of their repertoire.

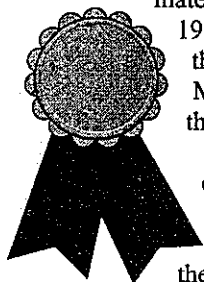
Inspired by the British Invasion rock of the 1960s as well as the punk rock and new wave of the 1970s and 1980s, Bill Popp & The Tapes are as distinctive as they are melodic. In fact, the band's two

CDs, "POPP THIS" and "INSIDES" are so British-influenced that if you never heard lead singer/composer/founder Popp speak with his strong Queens accent, you'd swear he was British himself.

Popp grew up in the working class College Point had yet to reach adolescence when he fell in love with the music of The Beatles. The singer was also drawn to other British Invasion acts like The Yardbirds, The Kinks and The Zombies, and the songs he began composing as a teen-ager clearly reflected his passion for strong melodies as well as rocking aggression. After graduating from high school in the 1970s, Popp became aware of punk and new wave—in fact, one of the bands Popp led, The Popsicles, included guitarist Keith Streng, who went on to enjoy recognition as a member of The Fleshtones.

"The Tapes wanted to combine the raw energy of punk and new wave with the pop melodies of British Invasion rock," Popp notes. "I had played new wave in various bands I was in before The Tapes, but The Beatles were still my main influence."

Their first single, "Love And Lust"/"Floating On A Teardrop," was released in 1982—followed by the quirky "Too Many Stars" and its B-side "Just Like In The Movies" in 1984. Popp recalls: "'Too Many Stars' was inspired by seeing so many people walking around clubs like they were stars. None of these guys were known at all, but they thought they were stars."



The Tapes went through their share of personnel changes over the years, and by the mid-1980s, Popp himself was the only remaining member from the original lineup. But The Tapes always reflected the leader's knack for warm melodies and strong hooks. One of the artists who passed through The Tapes was Anne Husick, who went on to join alternative rock outfit Band Of Susans, and has worked with such important AntiFolk luminaries as Lach, Joe Bendik, Tricia Scotti, Lenny Molotov, Zane Campbell, as well as fronting her own combine, Shameless. She will be performing at this year's Daddy Tapes Benefit both as a member of Joe Bendik and The Heathens, and as the leader of her own band.

Many of the songs that Popp & The Tapes had been performing regularly in the 1980s—including the reflective "Oné Door Slams" and the gutsy "Punk Girls"—found their way to their debut album of 1990, POPP THIS, which enjoyed a great deal of favorable press. Magazines like BILLBOARD, CASH BOX, PULSE!, THE DAILY NEWS, and THE BOSTON PHOENIX had nothing but praise for songs ranging from the poetic "Zippora" (an ode to a dancer for the New York Ballet) to the insistent "Stone To Throw" and the poignant "Freedom's Blood," a lament for the Chinese student protesters who were shot down in Beijing's Tien Amin Square in 1989.

Presently, after years of changing membership, the band's solid lineup consists of Popp on lead vocals and keyboards, Jerry Barnas on lead guitar, Alex Craven on bass and Rob Holm on drums. Barnas is a Chicago native who toured extensively with folk-pop group The Serendipity Singers, while Long Island native Holm has shared a stage with Richie Havens and played with such New York bands as The Benders, rue Faith and Suspect. Craven, a rock and jazz musician who studied at Boston's prestigious Berklee College Of Music, once played as a sideman for the famous jazz drummer Buddy Rich.

Playing live, the Tapes found the most popular song from INSIDES to be the infectious "Sidewalk Dance." Written in the 1980s, "Sidewalk Dance" has nothing to do

with the AntiFolk scene. It was inspired by the hip-hop break dancers he had seen when his "day gig" as a plumber for the City Of New York brought him to poor inner-city neighborhoods.

"When I was working in Brooklyn," Popp remembers, "I

Bill Popp does our hearts good.

had to go into some horrible, broken-down neighborhoods. But I saw that some of the kids who were into break dancing seemed happy even though they were surrounded by poverty and abandoned, burned-out buildings. As bad as their neighborhoods were, these kids were dancing in the streets."

Popp's band is currently in the process of recording its third album, BLIND LOVE SEES TEARS.

Popp hopes to avoid some of the pitfalls that befell the last album.

"When INSIDES came out," Popp explains, "I was spending so much time on the Benefit show, I don't think I promoted the album as well as I should have."

Luckily, this year, the events are separated by some time. Still recording his golden tunes for BLIND LOVE SEES TEARS, Popp is able to put all energy into the benefit show. Featuring AntiFolk regulars like Shameless, Joe Bendik & The Heathens, and a special solo show from Mary Ann Farley, as well as Christine Hajjar, the Sounds of Ireland, Cosmix Box, the Chiclets, and his own band, the evening will start at 7PM at Kenny's Castaway's.

The event will bring even more money to the American Heart Association. In its thirteen year history, the Daddy Tapes benefits have netted over \$5,000. It is a testament, on two fronts, to a son's devotion to his parents.

"For March, it's like, 'George is alive. Daddy Tapes exists.' I think he'd be really happy if he knew. It still keeps my father's name alive. That was the whole idea to begin with."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON BILL POPP & THE TAPES OR THE ANNUAL DADDY TAPES BENEFIT, CONTACT 121ST ST RECORDS @ BILLPOPP@WEBSPAN.NET OR 718-359-4110

Fellow musicians and other humans:

Tired of paying for hourly rehearsal time?

We have a nice room in Little Italy (about 40' x 50') with 2 bands, looking for a third to share the load.

Both bands have been together for a long time and have been renting together for 3 years.

We're honest and clean (like Paulie's grandfather).

\$300 gets you 3 rehearsal blocks on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

We'd also need 1 month security and a key deposit (when a band leaves, we change the locks).

It's a third flight sub-basement, so you will have to deal with stairs when moving your equipment.

It's really not so bad...

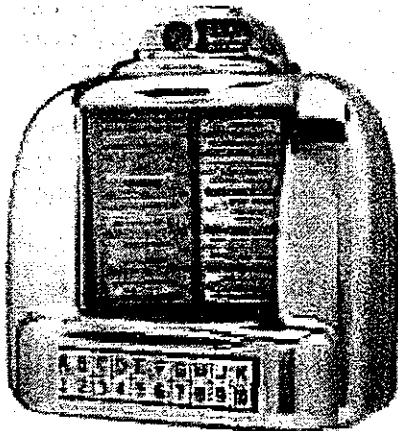
Anyone who's interested should contact me at: mrping@earthlink.net or at my home phone:

Bill Gerstel 212.674.4871

GETTING THERE WAS HALF THE FUN

Mark Humble remembers the early days of his AntiFolk experience. What's more, he writes about it...

Like many youthful loiterers in NYC way back in the 80s who could barely afford a movie ticket, I decided to try my hand at singing in bars, accompanied only by my acoustic guitar. This led me to the McDougal/Bleecker Street area. Speakeasy and Sun Mountain were among the places with open mike nights. Armed with my guitar and some memorized popular songs, I made my way to the entrance of one of these establishments. I was stopped dead in my tracks when I saw the "No Covers" sign on the door. I was surprised by how rigidly they enforced originality, but I was determined to rise to the challenge. I went home and wrote a couple of songs. This was only the beginning of my troubles. I learned that it was almost impossible for a newcomer to play any earlier than midnight unless you were incredibly lucky or knew the right people. And when you did get up on stage, you played your heart out to three other suckers waiting to go on even later. Whoever booked the gigs seemed to have an even longer waiting list. But these places seemed to be the only game in town, and I admired their strong allegiance to originality. I continued writing new songs.



One night I was waiting to play. I noticed the woman on stage performing a song I'd heard before, called "Blowing In The Wind." Unless Bob Dylan stole it from her, this was a cover. Since she made no such a claim

of authorship, and no one at the club seemed to object, I wondered if the "No Covers" rule had been lifted. I went out to the front door and took a look to see if the sign was still there. It was, but I realized I'd been wrong in the first place: it said "No Cover." Feeling light-headed, I left.

I found out about a bunch of clubs in the East Village with open mike nights: Nightingales, CB's Gallery, Downtown Beirut II and Chameleon among others, started by people seeking an alternative to the West Village scene. None of them were too crowded, so there was no problem signing up. And you could usually get a gig on another night if you showed up a few weeks in a row and were

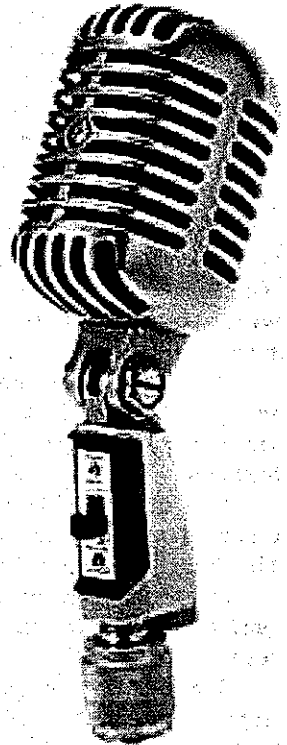
halfway decent. It was night and day compared to the West Village clubs, but there were problems. Some of the open mikes were a little too casual. The person running the night would be there for a few weeks, then be gone without warning for a while, then show up again, maybe on another night. And most of these open mikes could get pretty dull - everyone was trying to be sooo polite. And the PA systems usually sucked or the people running them didn't have a clue.

Without question, Chameleon had the worst PA system in the East Village. Sometimes it didn't work at all, so you sang your louder songs and hoped for the best. But Chameleon was better in other ways. Lach was there every Thursday at 6:30 to sign up the acts, pretty much without fail. Chameleon also had a host - someone who made the evening an event. Lach has taken on this task at Sidewalk, but back then the job fell to Fred Geobold or Bob

Sikoryak and then John Saleeby. Fred ran his shows with a subtly twisted sense of humor. Bob was a very high-energy performance artist, and he liked to involve the audience in his pieces. Once he tried to get the audience to make brownies from scratch in 8 minutes and it almost worked. John was sarcastic, cutting down just about anyone or anything, especially himself.

I didn't even know Lach had organized the whole thing. I figured he was just being a helpful bartender who had a shift that happened to be at the same time as the open mike. He also downplayed his own singer/songwriter side for months after I started hanging around. He signed people up, handed the list over to the host and served up drinks and wisecracks. He also made sure that the show wrapped up by 10. There wasn't much talk back then of Anti-Folk or the Fort, or any kind of movement. I'm not the joiner type, and I actually hung around Chameleon much less when it began to be tagged as such. That's one of the main reasons I feel so ambivalent about the Sidewalk today. It was just a lot of people who ended up at the same place at the same time. With a really shitty PA.

I eventually volunteered to bring a couple of mikes and help mix the sound. This was greeted with enthusiasm and free pints of beer.



TO BE CONTINUED...

Winter AntiFolk Festival

BIONIC FINGER AT THE C NOTE

FEBRUARY 10TH, 1999

the former queens of antifolk tell of their most memorable show yet

extra kick so I had it on all night. It really helped to keep me excited and on the beat.

NAN

First of all, it's not true I made out with the woman who kept screaming "Asshole!", even though she was clearly asking for it when she threw her bra and eventually her entire outfit up on stage.

Under the influence of some mad punk rock adrenalin, we asked a member of the audience to be our slave for the night. The only person who complied was Jon Berger, who seemed excited at the thought of a dominatrix scene, which we were going to do as the prelude to Alina's funk-up version of "You know you like it when I step on you with my boot..."

Well, at the last minute Jon Berger locked himself in the bathroom with Alina's whip, which left us to only one alternative: John Denver Covers. These went off quite well, despite Christine's hissing sneers, "Wife Beater...Rocky Mountain High My Ass..."

After Jon Berger came out of the closet, I mean the loo, he went crazy! He tried to flog us with Alina's whip! Apparently he'd gotten confused and thought HE was supposed to be the dominatrix.

This made Christine so enraged that she threw me on the drum set on her way to pummel Jon Berger. Pam wasn't too thrilled about me knocking over her drums, and she wouldn't let me play them during her song. So I just played one cymbal with my fingernail, determined to keep steady time.

We were all incapacitated with injuries at this point, except for Pam who finished off the night with a lovely a capella version of "Careless Whisper". Not a dry eye in the house.



PAM

I was getting over a cold the night of the C-Note gig, so details are a little bit hazy. I felt like I was moving in a fog for most of the night. But I'd have to say that it went rather well. And my orgasm was fantastic, as usual. I wear a pink strap-on vibrating metronome. I don't normally turn it on for every song, but that night, being sickly, I needed an

I climaxed during "Big Dick" of course, it being the fastest song and the one I bounce the most on. A few songs later I had a nice surprise during Christine's hit, "Come On and Tell Me How You Like to be Whipped, Baby" when I had a second orgasm, although it was interrupted somehow. My memory of it is scattered among some rather odd recollections of Nan being tossed onto my snare drum, and Alina chasing Jon Berger around with a whip. Also, being crowned Queen of the Winter Anti-Folk Festival was truly an honor. I think maybe everyone felt sorry for me because I had the flu. But it was so sweet of the girls to pick me up and carry me around the club so that everyone could kiss my feet. So yeah, it was a good gig. It definitely stands out from the others, despite my devastating illness that night which ended in the emergency room at St. Vincent's. And by the way, it wasn't "Careless Whisper", it was "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go!"



CHRISTINE

The night started out well. The crowd was restless, angry almost. The anticipation was as tight and sharp as barbed wire. We began the set with my new song, hard and fast. The response was immediate. The crowd surged toward us. I was ready to start cracking heads with my guitar if they over-ran us but luckily, they never crossed the line. The band was tight. Pam propelled the song along with the bass drum booming and the toms thundering. Nan filled out the bottom slapping the bass with pure fury while bouncing straight up and down in the air. Alina's hand was a blur as she pounded out a doubletime rhythm on her axe while striking guitar god poses. I was anchored behind the mike, my eyes on my guitar neck, wanting to explode but unable to let go. There was nary a twitch of my legs. I was a singing statue. When the songs ended the roar of the crowd washed over me and I finally released. I threw the guitar down, kicked the amp and knocked over the mike stand. I screamed "Fuck" at the top of my lungs and stomped off the stage into the ladies room shaking like a wet dog in the cold. I was overcome. It was too much, the

one with an obscene name that gets arrested! Why...? Pictures? That's



BIONIC FINGER AT THE C NOTE

impossible. I work for a corporation! I'm a worker ant! I have stock options and a 401K, goddammit! I don't waste my time with that music crap. I didn't go to college to be one of those (snide) 'starving artists', now did I? How many times do I have to tell you, I don't know what you're talking about, I never even go to that sleazy part of town. How am I? Well, I don't know. My head kinda hurts and you're keeping me up, but that's it. So what did they do, anyway? Wow, I almost wish I was there to see that one. Almost. No, it's okay, you probably just have the wrong number. Yeah, good luck with your story."

That was odd. Well, whatever. I'm so tired I could sleep on stale bread rolls. Ahhh. Turning over. Pulling warm comfy blanket up over my chin, closing eyes, counting money and...

Brrriiiiing!!!

Groan. Why doesn't that guy believe me? I'm not gonna answer it. But what if it's Hank on his cell phone about my presentation this afternoon?

Alright, alright.

"Hello? Can I what? Bail you OUT! Do I know you?"

adoration, the blind pure emotion of the crowd. No one from the band came after me. They were used to my outbursts by now. When I came back out of the bathroom Jon Berger was running towards the john with a whip. Apparently he had volunteered to be our slave but had freaked out at the last minute. Then Nan started playing John Denver covers. I can't stand that wife-beating, pseudo-country boy. All of a sudden Berger came screaming out of the bathroom brandishing the whip. I pushed Nan aside and hit Alina in the face with the bass trying to go after him. I managed to wrestle him into a chair and tie him down with the whip. After the beating I'd administered to him my hands hurt so badly I couldn't play. The drums were in total disarray. Nan was making out with this chick who kept demanding we play our song "Asshole." Alina was screaming "My eyes oh god my eyes." Pam had taken center stage. I think I heard a chorus of "Careless Whisper" before I blacked out.

ALINA <5 AM>

Brrriiiiing!!!

No. Too Sleepy. If someone died, why rush now. Keeps ringing. Jesus Christ. Fine! Now I'm awake.

"Hello? Who is this? Why would I have a comment on THAT? Of course I'm NOT in a band, especially



ADDITIONAL NOTES:

JON BERGER: I don't know what any of these women are talking about. I have never seen Bionic Finger in my life, let alone done a damned thing with their whips, or their bathrooms, or anything else. I, for one, resent the implications that I would be unwilling to take my beating like a man, that I would bawl like a baby at the sight of my own blood, and that I would kick scream and dribble snot just to avoid pain. I deny anything having to do with February 10th. In fact, I was out of town that day. And anyone who claims otherwise better have some pretty severe proof, because that's my story, and I'm sticking by it.



REVIEWS

CHARLIE STARKWEATHER – *WHERE I'M CALLING FROM...*

reviewed by Adam Fieled.

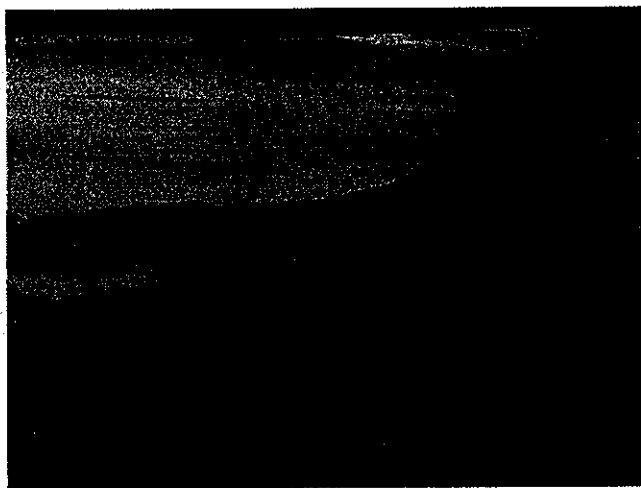
Charlie Starkweather's music, persona, and general vibe are anything but trendy. Emoting with a blunt gruffness that makes Tom Waits seem smooth, Starkweather courts a dark, brutal, potent sensuality. "Where I'm Calling From", in its best moments, combines substance with style to form a cohesive, corrosive whole.

The album opens with "His Kisses In Your Mouth", a thumbnail sketch of jealousy that builds to a larynx-shredding climax recalling Trent Reznor's "Head Like A Hole". Intimacy is perceived as threat, honesty as revenge.

"Judas To Your Jesus" features a lovely string/acoustic guitar arrangement, and psycho-religious images that illuminate the music, without sounding phony. Starkweather sings of hopeless circumstance, and equally hopeless desire - "If I had known it would be you crucified/ I would have lied".

"Your Body", with its radio-friendly chorus, proves that Starkweather can write good pop. His hooks do not, however, interfere with his desperation. "Make me beg/ I'll do what you want me to", he sings.

"Where I'm Calling From", a crushing tale of alcoholism, closes the album. Couplets like "I'm sober I get the shakes/ In our bed I'm wide awake" make this a most



arresting song, recalling the intensity and short-story sensibility of early Springsteen. Starkweather makes the Springsteen connection explicit in songs like "Back In My Arms", a Bruce gem that was salvaged from obscurity, and

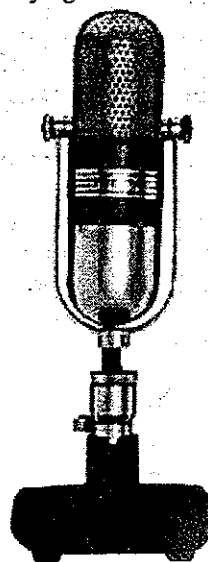
"When She Dances", which cops some of its feel from the Boss's "Meeting Across The River".

The album is not flawless. "East Village Girl" is a boring attempt at parody, with a contrived reggae groove. For the most part, however, Starkweather demonstrates a rare command of language and a strong sense of melody, filtered through a poet's romantic lens. Starkweather is all about depth. Death, too. Maybe that's why he sounds so alive.

MIKE RECHNER – *ADJECTIVE*

reviewed by Jeff Lewis.

Mike Rechner's CD "Adjective" is an inaccurate description of Rechner's music. Wait, scratch that, it's a lousy description of his LIVE sound, but obviously that's not what he's going for. When I think of Mike I picture his harrowing live performances, one man tearing ragged, revolving chords from an acoustic guitar and standing stock still, rooted by the power of the freaky, hypnotic, ridiculous incantations that stream in a deadly serious chant from his mouth as he stares at the floor. Whoah, gives me chills thinking about it. His CD introduces at least four other musicians, including Annie Husick on bass and vocal stuff, which drenches Mike's signature sound in a full environment of drums and organ and harmonica. Me, I'm a purist I guess, 'cause if I was trying to tell someone about Mike's music (a very difficult task) I would certainly drag that person to see him live rather than lend him/her this album - but again, Mike's obviously not trying to recreate that live sound, but create a different one, which he actually does quite well. Part of this success may be that the songs I remember most from his live shows (having seen them once who could ever erase from their mind the one or two or three chord loops that accompany such mind warping repeated phrases as "mayonnaise jar/ mayonnaise jar" or "dead fuck, who will fuck it" or "we will kill you/ then we will eat you" ?) are not on this album in altered form; instead there are a bunch of songs I've never heard before, and they're damn good. How can you mess with the bone stompin' sound of the title track, or the profound lyrics of Mike's salute to Walker, Texas Ranger, or my current favorite track, John Wayne and John Ford: "John Wayne met John Ford and they wrote a Beatles song/right after the



sunrise to celebrate the death of an outlaw" is the first line, and it gets even better from there! And the couple of songs that I did know

that appear in dressed up form certainly aren't diminished by the drums, etc.. Songs like Christ Figure, which retains it's lyric's power ("I know a boy who lives on 7th Avenue/he doesn't have a blemish on his body" - stuff like that just stays with you!), but there's just something about seeing one desperate man on stage, you know? It's the magic of doing more with less. But I certainly recommend "Adjective" as one of the best (one of the only!) real ROCK albums on this wussy-ass songwritin' scene! My advice is to blast the psychedelic melting-voice and bone-stomping beat of "Mine it's Yours" at a room full of so-called songwriters and watch the pussies take cover. I'm gonna listen to it again right now. - Jeff Lightning Lewis

BILLY KELLY - TRUE IRISH GHOST STORIES

reviewed by Adam Fieled.

Billy Kelly is unique among the performers I've seen in NYC. His subtlety separates him from the pack. He radiates a quiet assurance that reels you in as it reaches out. Kelly captivates with the intensity, and intelligence, of his material. He has a fine ear for melody and structure, that brings to mind Nick Drake, Loudon Wainwright, Gordon Lightfoot. His delicacy of touch on the guitar rivals that of James Taylor, but with balls. There is a mysterious aura around Billy, a dark fog of controlled passion, wrapped with vulnerability in a tight fist. Watching Billy is like riding a roller coaster; the tension can be unbearable. He always leaves you wanting more.

He's got an album out. It's called "True Irish Ghost Stories", and it's a winner. "Throw Me a Rose" opens the record, and it's a sure-fire classic. To a tune reminiscent of Leonard Cohen's "Bird On a Wire", Kelly delivers a wistful meditation on death and rebirth - "Is this life that I have all that I have?"

Elsewhere, Kelly's grounding in traditional folk balladry is evident in songs like "The Sadness We Have Known" and "Saint John's Point". Particularly poignant is "The Sadness We Have Known", which has a hymn-like melody and a haunting lyric - "with this round, my friends/ we'll drown/ the sadness we have known".

Kelly also excels at writing narratives. "Escape From the Big Bar" is an extended story/song in the manner of Harry Chapin's "Taxi", and is similarly stirring. Kelly has a knack for making simple images fresh with inventive turns of phrase - "the barstool kept pushing me

REVIEWS

backward/ so I stood myself up on my feet".

This album is the manifestation of a mature sensibility. What it lacks in spontaneity, it makes up for

in depth. Though Kelly is quick with a quip onstage, on record he could stand to take life a little less seriously. His world-weariness can turn monotonous, as in "The Rath" - "I see the statues/ now I am/ a statue of myself". Still, the specificity and originality of his vision are impressive. I'm looking forward to whatever comes next.



RECORD RELEASE PARTY

RECORD RELEASE PARTY

Sidewalk Café (94 Avenue A @ 6th St)

Saturday March 27
10:00PM

7-Marilee

7:30-Briana Winter

8:30-Tricia Scotti

9-Nancy Falkow

10-Shameless

11-Bionic Finger

12-Mich Van Hautem

free admisson! incredibly music! fun for all!

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BLOODY RAINBOW OVER NEW YORK CITY: THE RETURN OF DANIEL JOHNSTON

Article by John Kessel

Illustrations by Daniel Johnston

They say there's three phases in the life of a man. In the first chapter all he thinks of is sexual gratification. In the second he obsesses about money. In the end, all he can think about is having a good bowel movement.

Having recently turned 38, legendary bipolar genius Daniel Johnston is finally making money. With the former outlaw billboard painter Ron English taking the role of *de facto* manager, Johnston tackled an intense art/music campaign that vies as one of the most productively hard working periods of his life. Legendary for stage fright, Daniel has shot himself in the proverbial foot many times, notably when he retired after viewing the airing of his spot on MTV's Cutting Edge show in 1985. Since 1998, with the aid of good friends like English, he has been touring regularly all over the world – to the best of my knowledge, for the first time.

In faithful DIY spirit, Johnston combined high profile dates in larger venues with smaller, affordable dives his fans can find accessible. Besides headlining 2 nights at Knitting Factory (with a band), he played CB's 313 Gallery and Sidewalk, both to capacity crowds. This one week marathon had Daniel doing alleged recording, videotaping, radio and press interviews, business meeting; and as many as 3 concerts a day. He's working his ass off, and it's taken its toll on his exuberant demeanor and his quavering, boy-like voice.

At the joint English / Johnston art opening at CB's 313 Gallery (2/3/99) it was clear that Daniel had arrived as a star. His primitively expressive pen and marker drawings (\$25-\$50 a pop) were pounced upon by several hundred cash clutching enthusiasts. English's paintings were all based on Johnston's images and themes; rife with symbols verging on the iconic. These works blur the line between the cute and the horrific. English is a most impressive painter, making colors glow and highlight so intensely that reproductions of his canvases made me think they were digitally altered photos of still lifes.

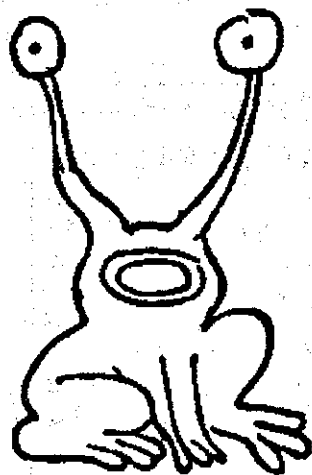
Around 10pm on Wednesday, February 3, Daniel took the stage with Ron keeping close guard, although he couldn't do much when the guitar string broke early in the set. Johnston plowed on for nearly an hour. His voice had

degenerated into a harsh rasp of nicotine phlegm and congested artery, but that's what the blues singers have allowed their bodies for years, and

Daniel is no exception. He played many songs from 'FUN' (Atlantic) and I was thrilled to hear the song 'Joy Without Pleasure', which dates back to Daniel's very first tape from 1981! The new songs from 'Rejected II' (Tim/Kerr) are dense with poetry and lilting melody, delivered live with the fragile tension of a house of cards. Classic line: "Abraham Lincoln walked 5 miles/ to return a nickel to a whore."

The next night (2/4/99) Daniel did an early, unadvertised set at Sidewalk, mostly doing new material. Like the previous gig, he seemed focused inward and addressed the audience only briefly. He seemed a bit uncomfortable, but delivered finely conceived new songs like 'Frustrated Artist', 'Dairy Queen' and 'Bloody Rainbow'. There was a disruptive faction of assholes, however, who kept talking through the show, reminding me that there was still an audience that follows Johnston less for his fine work than for the bloodlust to see a freakshow. Johnston wasn't satisfying that demographic. I then recalled a female who was heckling Johnston the previous night, and wondered if she decided to bring her family for Thursday?

I missed Daniel's first headlining night at Knitting Factory to go to Meow Mix, where I saw a fierce dyke singer named Joie, reputed to have the biggest clitoris of any lesbian to have played the club. Lemme tell ya, for a folkie, she plays the acoustic guitar like she stuck her hand in a Cuisanart!



BLOODY RAINBOW OVER NEW YORK CITY: THE RETURN OF DANIEL JOHNSTON

Article by John Kessel

Illustrations by Daniel Johnston

entertainment lawyer. The shallow consider him a cross between Tom Waits and Jim Carroll. Tonight he was the bastard spawn of Chuck D and Norman Mailer-the hardest and most literate white rapper you ever heard.

Oh fuck, I'm supposed to talk about Daniel. After Knitting Factory, he had his art opening party at the tres chi-chi club Cheetah. He did a short performance at his private room and held court in his VIP booth as the trendoids boogied to the high decibel hip hop blasting through the room. A truly weird scenario to picture Daniel Johnston in. Lowering myself among the flock of fans, sycophants and groupies, I spoke to Daniel about his work. Inquiring the name of Johnston's famous frog character, he first told me it's name was Vienna, then Jerimiah. Asking for insight regarding the new piece, 'Bloody Rainbow', he merely stated, "It's about the great tribulation". Then he lowered his again to watch his cigarette burn. I left feeling like I was turned down for the senior prom date.

The second night Daniel headlined Knitting Factory, he was the greatest rock star in the world.

the disparate indie rock detrius that made up his pick-up band last November where replaced by 5 star hit men Marc Ribot, David Licht and J.D. Foster. For the first time on a New York stage, Johnston did a solo set with a properly tuned guitar! So good! When he addressed the crowd this

Sidetracked again to the Fort to see Dan Monihan (with a rhythm section) do a showcase for an

suicide...And he was sentenced to death! The audience doubled over.

Classic lyric #2: "The milk was local/but what did it matter?"

The band portio of the show was the best rock music I'd heard yet this year. If Dan's next song was only done as a poem, I still would've banged my head:

"We're gonna rock!/We're gonna rock!/We're gonna rock this town to-night!

Well I love that mar-i-jua-na/ It makes me feel so high...Makes you forget about the lie of the Hollywood Whore..."

And the music was tribal and heavy in ways I never heard before; a truly magic moment. It continued for 5 more songs, then more solo Daniel with producer Kramer on the chestnut, 'Deviltown'. With 'Caspar the Friendly Ghost' it was two encores.; Daniel left the stage beaming, his fingers in the familiar rock 'love' salute; indexes and pinkies forward. And that's how I want to remember him.

At Cheetah, Ron English told me of all the success of the Johnston visit. The book deal on the drawings. The comic deal with Marvel. The movie soundtrack deal. Hallelujah! Daniel

Johnston is moving into the American conscience. He's even trivia used in puzzles in GAMES magazine.

Yesiree, this is the Big Money period for Johnston. But I tell ya, when the day comes that Daniel writes a song about feces, I'll bet it'll bring a tear to your eye...
<John Kessel>

THERE'S STILL HOPE



was laughing and telling jokes. He told a story of a dream he had of some guy ("And he looked just like ME!") standing before a judge, convicted for attempting



SCHEDULE FANTASTIQUE!

Mon.Mar.8- The Antihoot w/ Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Mar.9- 7:30-The Valentines, 8:30-Jeff Nimah, 9-Sonya Hunter, 10-Harry Nagle, 10:30-Z

Wed.Mar.10- 8-Hungary Ghost, 9-Chad Parsons, 9:30-John Kessel, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Mar.11- 7:30-Bag One, 8:30-Chris Kock, 9-Mo, 9:30-Red Radio Flyer, 10:30-Billy
Campion (of the Bogmen), 11-Troy Boonsboro

Fri.Mar.12- 8-Gilligan Stump, 9-Tricia Scotti B'Day Bash, 10-Homer Erotic, 11-Josh Allan,
12-Gil Schwartz and the Lava Daredevils

Sat.Mar.13- 8-Lunchin, 9-Ruth Gerson, 10-Lach, 11-Les Sans Culottes, 12-Dots Will Echo

Sun.Mar.14- 8-Dimebagel, 8:30-Johnny Sizzle, 9:30-Leroy Montana, 10-Jack Grace

11-Maria Montiel

Mon.Mar.15- The Antihoot w/ Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Mar.16- 8-Billy Kelly, 8:30-Ariana, 9-Kevin Kadish, 9:30-Andrew John, 10:30-Tony James

Wed.Mar.17- 7:30-Betsy Thomson, 8:30-O'Smith, 9-Chris Decker, 9:30-Joie, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Mar.18- 8-Michal The Girl, 8:30-Bouva, 9-Trina Hamlin, 10-S.A.M.'s Roamin'
Cadillac 11-Mich Van Hautem

Fri.Mar.19- 8-Copper Dalton, 9-Janet Vodka, 10-Kid Lucky, 11-Magges, 12-Chris Barron

Sat.Mar.20- 8-Heather Eatman, 9-Smelt, 10-Joe Bendik and the Heathens, 11-David Dragov
and the Drunken Artistt Tribute 12-Larry Goggin

Sun.Mar.21- 8:30-Kathy Martino, 9-Amy Madden, 9:30-Devorah Silverstein, 10-Grey
Revell's one year anniversary show, 11-Seth with Jeff Lightning Lewis & Gregg Weiss

Mon.Mar.22- The Antihoot w/ Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Mar.23- 7:30-Wayne Gladstone, 8:30-Pablo, 9-Peter Dizozza, 10-Michael Marena
10:30-Andrew McCann, 11-Thom McFarlane

Wed.Mar.24- 8-Liz Skillman, 9-Peter Spink Trio, 9:30-Clay Mitchell, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Mar.25- 8-Lounge-O-Leers, 9-Mia Johnson, 10-Randy Kaplan, 11-Jim Knable

Fri.Mar.26- 8-Vida Loca, 9-Fisherman's Stew, 10-Johnny Seven, 11-The Queen V 12-The Bones

**Sat.Mar.27 - Shameless Record Release Party... 7-Marilee, 7:30-Briana Winter, 8:30-
Tricia Scotti, 9- Nancy Falkow, 10-Shameless, 11-Bionic Finger, 12-Mich Van Hautem**

Sun.Mar.28- 5-7-Stephanie Berry Photo Exhibit, 8:30-Ben Blankenship, 9-John Kessel 9:30
Kenny Davidsen, 10-Lenny Molotov, 10:30-Major Matt Mason

Mon.Mar.29- The Antihoot w/ Lach. Sign-up at 7:30.

Tues.Mar.30- 7:30-Day With Don, 8:30-Sabina, 9-Kevin Kadish, 9:30-Roxanne Beck
10-Full Throttle Aristotle

Wed.Mar.31- 8-Paul Page, 8:30-Kevin Drain, 9-Uncle Carl, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Apr.1- 8:30-Wayne's Remains, 9-Bill Popp and the Tapes, 10-Matthew Puckett 11-
Numinous Peach

Fri.Apr.2- 8-Ruth Gerson, 9-Franco-American Spectacle Fantastique

Sat.Apr.3- 9-The Johnson Boys, 10-The Adverteasers, 11-Richard X. Heyman

Sun.Apr.4- 7:30-Meg Flather, 8:30-Post Holocaust Pop

Mon.Apr.5- The Antihoot w/ Lach. Sign-up at 7:30

Tues.Apr.6- Keith Bowneice, 10-Stellan Wahlstrom

Wed.Apr.7- 7:30-Damion Wolfe, 8:30-LoriJo Manley, 9-Zipthunk, 10-Rick Shapiro

Thurs.Apr.8- 8:30-Tom Stahl, 9-Sean Lee, 10-Elin Jr,

Fri.Apr.9- 9-Ruth Gerson, 10-Heather Eatman, 11-Yukka Flats

MAGNIFICENT MUSIC AT MAGNIFICENT PRICES! HOW COULD YOU GO WRONG?